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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the relationship between students' attitudes toward their liberal arts Associate Degree (AD) programs and their academic outcomes. Questionnaires were randomly administered to 300 AD students enrolled at New York City Technical College in spring 1996, receiving usable responses from 121 students. Further, respondents' performance after three semesters of study was analyzed with respect to grade point average (GPA), number of college credits earned, and enrollment or graduation status. Study findings included the following: (1) after 3 semesters, 18% of the sample had a GPA of 0 to 1.99, 65% had a GPA of 2.0 to 2.99, and 17% had a GPA of 3.0 to 4.0; (2) 23% had earned 0 to 29 credits, 35% had earned 30 to 49, 21% had earned 50 to 69, and 20% had earned 70 or more; (3) 12% had completed an internal transfer to another academic curriculum, 15% had stopped out, and 18% had graduated; and (4) students with the highest levels of dissatisfaction were more likely to stop out, to have achieved a GPA of 0 to 1.99, to have earned between 0 and 29 credits, and to have completed an internal transfer than those with low dissatisfaction levels. As a result of the findings, it was recommended that the questionnaire be used to help the college predict which students are at academic risk. (BCY)

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Student Attitudes Toward Liberal Arts Degree Program As A Function of Academic Outcomes

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Abstract

The data within this study suggests that the LAA/LAS student with positive attitudes toward the Liberal Arts Degree Program during their first semester of study had greater academic achievements than those who had negative attitudes toward the Program

Context and Overview of the Research:

According to the Sociological literature, attitudes and opinions of individuals toward social events are seen as helping organize and categorize the world in a meaningful and consistent fashion. Attitudes and opinions this research suggests that: 1) provide social order; 2) maximize rewards; 3) minimize punishments and 4) generally acts to clarify the individual's frame of reference (Treiman, 1981).

Moreover, most contemporary attitude and opinion theories explicitly recognize the importance of perceived social support for behavior which is consistent with the individual's self-concept. Indeed, research at City Tech found that students interpret and judge their achievements, progress and abilities in ways congruent with prior self-assessment, searching for self-confirming feedback and often resisting feedback which is inconsistent with past self-concept(s) (Gerardi, 1989; 1990).

Furthermore, Mickelson (1989) argued that there are two forms of educational attitudes which may contribute to academic performance - abstract and concrete. Abstract attitudes are based upon ideologies about education and career opportunity. These attitudes are associated with the American merit system and education. Concrete attitudes are indicators of realized benefits of social mobility and education.

Those with low abstract and concrete attitudes this research suggests, are likely to perform poorly academically. However, those with high abstract and concrete attitudes are expected to have

positive academic perform.

Other research suggests that student satisfaction with the college experience is important because it may determine the students' persistence and performance. Indeed, research suggests that the degree of satisfaction, when measured by mid-year, differentiated between students who re-enrolled or dropped-out and those with positive or negative academic outcomes the following year (Sewll, 1970).

Therefore, based upon the above mention research, this research asked the following question: Is there a relationship between student attitudes toward the LAA/LAS Degree Program and their academic outcomes?

Types of data and Research Procedure:

This study was a longitudinal project covering a 3 semester period employing two categories of data in analyzing the main question posed within this research. The categories of data were: (1) STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD THE LAA/LAS DEGREE PROGRAM: this was assessed from a commercially prepared questionnaire (ACT) which was randomly administered to 300 LAA/LAS students enrolled at New York City Technical College during the Spring 1996 semester. Approximately 121 questionnaires were returned completed. This sample represents approximately 10% of the students enrolled in the LAA/LAS Program. The questionnaire has a 95% confidence level with a +/- .01 error range based upon a 10% random sample.

Although this questionnaire had many variables, this study used only the variables associated with the respondents attitudes toward the program's effectiveness. The students were asked to indicate the degree to which each experience has contributed to his/her personal/intellectual growth, and the level to which the program prepared the student for a career and future academic study. The possible response categories were greatly effected, moderately effected and little effect.

(2) MEASURES OF COLLEGE PERFORMANCE: These measurements included the respondent's GPA after 3 semesters of study, the number of college credits earned after 3 semesters of study, enrollment status and graduation rates.
These data were taken from City Tech's official student records.

Descriptive Data:

After 3 semesters of study, 18% of the LAA/LAS students in this study earned a GPA of 0-1.99, 65% a GPA of 2.00-2.99 and 17% a GPA of 3.00-4.00.

Twenty three percent earned 0-29 credits, 35% earned 30-49 credits, 21% earned 50-69 credits and 20% earned 70 or more credits over the 3 semester period.

Twelve percent completed an internal transfer, 15% stopped-out of the College and 18% were graduated (see Table 1).

Results:

As indicated earlier, student satisfaction with the college experience is important because it may determine the students' persistence and performance.

These data suggest that the level of satisfaction with the Program was an important indicator of academic performance. The data under discussion within this section can be found in Table 2.

GPA of 0-1.99:

Of those LA/LAS students who have earned a GPA of 0-1.99 after 3 semesters of study, 50% indicated, during their first semester of study, that their intellectual growth was greatly effected by the Program, 39% suggested that the Program moderately effected their intellectual growth and 11% responded that the Program had little influence on their intellectual growth.

Forty eight percent indicated that their personal growth was greatly effected by the Program, 32% suggested that the Program moderately contributed to their personal growth and 20% responded that the Program did little to advance their personal growth.

Forty one percent indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for future study, 11% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for future study and 47% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for future study.

Lastly, 64% indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for a career, 30% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for a career and 24% responded that the Program and College

did little to prepare them for a career.

GPA 2.00-2.99:

Of those LAA/LAS students who have earned a GPA of 2.00-2.99 after 3 semesters of study, 73% indicated that during their first semester of study, their intellectual growth was greatly effected by the Program, 23% suggested that the Program moderately effected their intellectual growth and only 4% responded that the Program had little influence on their intellectual growth.

Sixty five percent indicated that their personal growth was greatly effected by the Program, 29% suggested that the Program moderately contributed to their personal growth and 6% responded that the Program did little to advance their personal growth.

Sixty one percent indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for future study, 29% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for future study and 10% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for future study.

Lastly, 51% indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for a career, 27% suggested that Program moderately prepare them for a career and 22% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for a career.

GPA 3.00-4.00:

Of those LAA/LAS students who have earned a GPA of 3.00-4.00 after 3 semesters of study, 57% indicated during their first

semester that their intellectual growth was greatly effected by the Program, 33% suggested that the Program moderately effected their intellectual growth and 10% responded that the Program had little influence on their intellectual growth.

Forty nine percent indicated that their personal growth was greatly effected by the Program, 43% suggested that the Program moderately contributed to their personal growth and 8% responded that the Program did little to advance their personal growth.

Fifty four percent indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for future study, 36% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for future study and 10% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for future study.

Lastly, 59% indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for a career, 32% suggested that Program moderately prepare them for a career and 9% responded that the Program did little to prepared them for a career.

0-29 Earned Credits:

Of those LAA/LAS students who have earned 0-29 credits after 3 semesters of study, 70% indicated during their first semester of study that their intellectual growth was greatly effected by the Program, 19% suggested that the Program moderately effected their intellectual growth and 11% responded that the Program had little influence on their intellectual growth.

Fifty percent indicated that their personal growth was greatly effected by the Program, 25% suggested that the Program moderately

contributed to their personal growth and 10% responded that the Program did little to advance their personal growth.

Fifty nine percent indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for future study, 23% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for future study and 18% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for future study.

Lastly, 43% indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for a career, 38% suggested that Program moderately prepared them for a career and 19% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for a career.

30-49 Earned Credits:

Of those LAA/LAS students who have earned 30-49 credits after 3 semesters of study, 82% indicated during their first that their intellectual growth was greatly effected by the Program, 7 % suggested that the Program moderately effected their intellectual growth and 11% responded that the Program had little influence on their intellectual growth.

Seventy one percent indicated that their personal growth was greatly effected by the Program, 18% suggested that the Program moderately contributed to their personal growth and 11% responded that the Program did little to advance their personal growth.

Sixty six percent indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for future study, 19% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for future study and 16% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for future study.

Lastly, 70% indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for a career, 11% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for a career and 18% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for a career.

50-69 Earned Credits:

Of those LAA/LAS students who have earned 50-69 credits after 3 semesters of study, 57% indicated the during their first semester their intellectual growth was greatly effected by the Program, 38% suggested that the Program moderately effected their intellectual growth and 5% responded that the Program had little influence on their intellectual growth.

Fifty seven percent indicated that their personal growth was greatly effected by the Program, 38% suggested that the Program moderately contributed to their personal growth and 5% responded that the Program Tech did little to advance their personal

Forty three percent indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for future study, 48% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for future study and 10% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for future study.

Lastly, 35% indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for a career, 40% suggested that Program moderately prepared them for a career and 25% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for a career.

70 or More Earned Credits:

Of those LAA/LAS students who have earned 70 or more credits after 3 semesters of study, 71% indicated during their first semester that their intellectual growth was greatly effected by the Program, 29% suggested that the Program moderately effected their intellectual growth and no one responded that the Program had little influence on their intellectual growth.

Fifty three percent indicated that their personal growth was greatly effected by the Program, 47% suggested that the Program moderately contributed to their personal growth and no one responded that the Program did little to advance their personal growth.

Forty five percent indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for future study, 45% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for future study and 10% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for future study.

Lastly, 60% indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for a career, 35% suggested that Program moderately prepared them for a career and 5% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for a career.

Internal Transfers:

Of those students who have transferred internally from the LAA/LAS program to another academic program, 79% indicated during their first semester of study that their intellectual growth was greatly effected by the Program, 7% suggested that the Program moderately effected their intellectual growth and 14% responded that the Program had little influence on their intellectual growth.

Thirty one percent indicated that their personal growth was greatly effected by the Program, 46% suggested that the Program moderately contributed to their personal growth and 23% responded that the Program did little to advance their personal growth.

Fifty seven percent indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for future study, 14% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for future study and 29% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for future study.

Lastly, 60% indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for a career, 35% suggested that Program moderately prepared them for a career and 5% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for a career.

Stopped-out:

Of those LAA/LAS students who have stopped-out, 72% indicated that during their first semester of study that their intellectual growth was greatly effected by the Program, 11% suggested that the Program moderately effected their intellectual growth and 17% responded that the Program had little influence on their intellectual growth.

Sixty five percent indicated that their personal growth was greatly effected by the Program, 18% suggested that the Program moderately contributed to their personal growth and 18% responded that the Program did little to advance their personal growth.

Forty seven percent indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for future study, 21% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for future study and 32% responded that the Program

did little to prepare them for future study.

Lastly, 65% indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for a career, 12% suggested that Program moderately prepared them for a career and 15% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for a career.

Graduation:

Of those LAA/LAS students who have been graduated, 50% indicated during their first semester of study that their intellectual growth was greatly effected by the Program, 50% suggested that the Program moderately effected their intellectual growth and no one responded that the Program had little influence on their intellectual growth.

Forty seven percent indicated that their personal growth was greatly effected by the Program, 53% suggested that the Program moderately contributed to their personal growth and no one responded that the Program did little to advance their personal growth.

Fifty percent indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for future study, 44% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for future study and 6% responded that the Program and College did little to prepare them for future study.

Lastly, 50% indicated that the Program prepared them greatly for a career, 44% suggested that the Program moderately prepared them for a career and 6% responded that the Program did little to prepare them for a career.

Conclusion:

As was indicated earlier, research suggests that student satisfaction with the college experience is important because it may determine the student's persistence and performance. This research argues that when measured by mid-year, the degree of satisfaction may differentiate between students who re-enrolled or dropped-out and students with positive or negative academic outcomes the following year.

After a mean analysis, these data suggest that the LAA/LAS student(s) with the highest level of dissatisfaction (when measured during their first semester at the mid-semester point) with the program stopped-out more frequently than those with lower levels of dissatisfaction. The dissatisfied student(s) were more likely to have achieved a GPA of between 0-1.99 (after 3 semesters of study), earned 0-29 credits over the 3 semester period and completed an internal transfer from the LAA/LAS Program to another academic curriculum (see Table 3).

By contrast, those with the highest level of satisfaction with the Program (when measured during their first semester at the mid-point) were more likely to have been graduated, earned a greater number of credits and have achieved GPA's of between 2.00-4.00 (see Table 3).

Overall, these data suggest that those who were satisfied with the Program's influence over their intellectual, personal, career and academic and career preparation when this study began, in Spring 1996, had, on average positive academic outcomes.

Recommendations:

These data may suggested that the ACT questionnaire used in this study may predict those at "academic risk" within the LAA/LAS Program. Hence, in an effort to increase the LAA/LAS retention rate, we suggest that this questionnaire should be distributed at the beginning of each semester to the Freshman cohort in order to identify those at risk. Once said individuals have been identified, the division may wish to create a proactive program to intervene before the student(s) stops-out. Such a proactive policy could increase the academic chances of such an individual while also being cost effective.

Table 1: Descriptive Data
N=121

Grade Point Average

0-1.99	2.00-2.99	3.00-4.00
18%	65%	17%

Credits Earned

0-29	30-49	50-69	70>
23%	35%	21%	20%

Graduation Rate = 18%

Internal Transfer = 12%

Stopped/Dropped-out = 15%

Table 2: Attitudinal Response As A Function of Academic Performance

N=121

GPA	Intellectual Growth			+ Personal Growth			+ Prepare For Future			+ Prepare Career		
	G	M	L	G	M	L	G	M	L	G	M	L
0-1.99 N=22	50%	39%	11%	+ 48%	32%	20%	+ 41%	11%	47%	+ 64%	30%	24%
2.00-2.99 N=79	73%	23%	4%	+ 65%	29%	6%	+ 61%	29%	10%	+ 51%	27%	22%
3.00-4.00 N=20	57%	33%	10%	+ 49%	43%	8%	+ 54%	36%	10%	+ 59%	32%	9%
Credits:												
0-29 N=27	70%	19%	11%	+ 50%	25%	25%	+ 59%	23%	18%	+ 43%	38%	19%
30-49 N=42	82%	7%	11%	+ 71%	18%	11%	+ 66%	19%	16%	+ 70%	11%	18%
50-69 N=25	57%	38%	5%	+ 57%	38%	5%	+ 43%	48%	10%	+ 35%	40%	25%
70 > N=24	71%	29%	0%	+ 53%	47%	0%	+ 45%	45%	10%	+ 60%	35%	5%
Graduated N=22	50%	50%	0	+ 47%	53%	0%	+ 50%	44%	6%	+ 50%	44%	6%
Internal Transfer N=15	79%	7%	14%	+ 31%	46%	23%	+ 57%	14%	29%	+ 60%	35%	5%
Stopped-out N=18	72%	11%	17%	+ 65%	18%	18%	+ 47%	21%	32%	+ 65%	12%	15%

G = Greatly Effected
M = Moderately Effected
L = Little Effect

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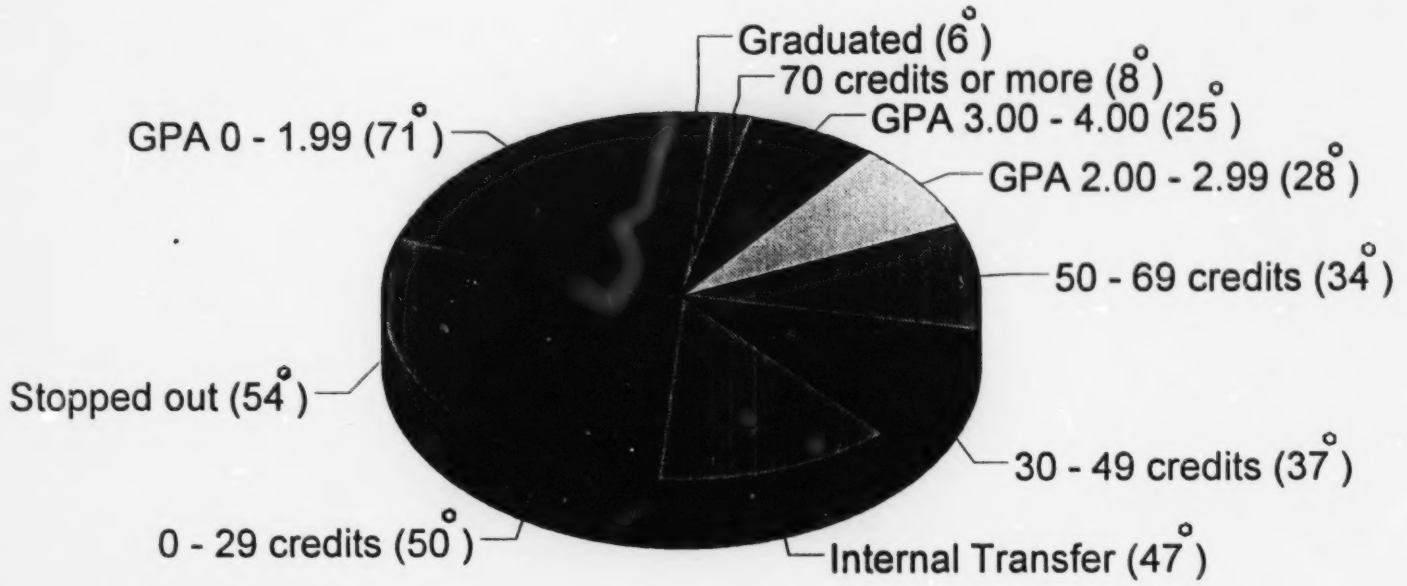
Table 3


Graduated (6°)
70 credits or more (8°)
GPA 3.00 - 4.00 (25°)
GPA 2.00 - 2.99 (28°)
50 - 69 credits (34°)
30 - 49 credits (37°)
Internal Transfer (47°)
0 - 29 credits (50°)
Stopped out (54°)
GPA 0 - 1.99 (71°)

Levels of Dissatisfaction by Academic Outcomes